

# **Exhibit 21**

# U.S. Department of State

## Diplomacy in Action

### Department Press Briefing - September 26, 2017

Heather Nauert  
Spokesperson  
Department Press Briefing  
Washington, DC  
September 26, 2017

[\(/video.state.gov/detail/video/5589433169001/?autoStart=true\)](https://video.state.gov/detail/video/5589433169001/?autoStart=true)

TRANSCRIPT:

3:10 p.m. EDT

**MS NAUERT:** Hey, everybody.

**QUESTION:** Hello.

**MS NAUERT:** How are you? Feels like a long time, so --

**QUESTION:** It's been a while.

**MS NAUERT:** -- good to see your faces back from UNGA. Hope you all had a good trip and got your expense reports in.

**QUESTION:** Not yet.

**MS NAUERT:** (Laughter.) Matt, they may have a few questions. Okay. Welcome. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** What -- I'm sorry, what is that supposed to mean? (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**MS NAUERT:** All right. Good afternoon, everybody. Hope you're doing well. I want to start out by announcing the Secretary's trip to Beijing. That will take place September 28th to 30th and that, in part, is in part to lay the framework of the upcoming presidential trip to China in November. As you may be aware, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson will meet with the senior Chinese leaders ahead of the President's trip. It's his second visit to China of his tenure. During that visit, Secretary Tillerson will discuss a range of issues including the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, also trade and investment. The Secretary's visit to China reaffirms the administration's commitment to further broadening and enhancing U.S. economic and security interests in the Asia Pacific region.

I know you all have a lot of questions, so we'll get right to those today. Where do you want to start?

**QUESTION:** All right. Let's just start with this breaking news, which you probably are aware of. Even if you don't have any kind of formal comment on it, I'm sure you have some thoughts about it. It's the Saudi decree allowing women to drive.

**MS NAUERT:** I heard that.

**QUESTION:** And?

**MS NAUERT:** I heard that. I don't want to get ahead of what the Saudi – I believe it's the Saudi foreign minister who's going to be making an announcement later today, so I don't want to get ahead of that.

**QUESTION:** Well, the Saudi Press Agency has announced it.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** They said a royal decree has been announced.

**MS NAUERT:** They've announced it? Is that correct?

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**MR GREENAN:** I haven't seen it (inaudible).

**QUESTION:** Yeah, it's out.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Yes, it is.

**MS NAUERT:** It's really out?

**QUESTION:** Don't worry.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** You're not breaking the news for them.

**MS NAUERT:** Well, then we're happy. We're happy. We're certainly happy to hear that. If Saudi women are now able to drive, certainly here in the United States we would certainly welcome that. And so I think it's a great step in the right direction for that country.

**QUESTION:** All right. Great step in the right direction, but would you say that they still need to do a little bit – or a lot more in terms of women's rights?

**MS NAUERT:** Look, I think we're just happy today. This news just came to us moments ago. So I think we're just happy today with the steps that they are taking and I think that that is a very positive sign.

**QUESTION:** Thanks. I have other stuff, but other people can go.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** Could I – yeah, could I move on to Kurdistan?

**MS NAUERT:** Sure.

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**MS NAUERT:** Let's start there.

**QUESTION:** Can you, first of all, give – we saw the statement that you issued, but has anything transpired since the conclusion of their referendum? Have you arrived at any other – any position?

**MS NAUERT:** Well, I know that the actual vote numbers have not come in yet. It's – we know that the turnout was obviously quite high and we certainly would understand why, a lot of enthusiasm, certainly, for that. I think our position, the U.S. Government's position on the Kurdish referendum we've talked about since the very day I got here, and that was that we did not support that referendum. Despite our efforts and our ongoing conversations with both Mr. Barzani and Mr. Abadi – the Secretary had spoken with them both by phone, I know, in recent days – we expressed our deep concern about that, and also our disappointment that they decided to go ahead and conduct that vote yesterday. We look at that as a unilateral referendum and it was something that the coalition partners, the D-ISIS coalition – I don't think there was a single nation that supported that.

**QUESTION:** Today, the Iraqi Government said – or in fact, they gave ultimatum to the Kurdistan region to close their airport system because they intend on closing their airspace. Do you have any comment on that?

**MS NAUERT:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Does that drive both --

**MS NAUERT:** So we've seen that – I've certainly seen that report. I'm aware of it. One of the things we would do is call on all sides to engage constructively. That, if that is, in fact, accurate, would not be an example of engaging constructively. We want the – both sides to come together and have some conversations and be able to move things forward, but do it in a constructive fashion.

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** Heather?

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Yeah, hi.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. So on your statement, you said that you will continue your historic relationship with the Kurdish people. Do you mean only the Kurdish people or with the Kurdish government as well?

**MS NAUERT:** Well, I think our conversations will be ongoing. We will continue to have conversations both with our friends in Baghdad as well as our friends in the north as well. We have a lot of conversations, as you all know. We have a close relationship with both. The United States Government and the coalition's concern about this and the timing of this referendum was we didn't want to splinter Iraq. We see the primary issue as taking on ISIS, defeating ISIS, annihilating ISIS, so that they never come to try to rule over and terrorize the Iraqi people again. We'd like to keep our eye on the ball with that. That failed; that is a concern of ours and is deeply disappointing.

**QUESTION:** And one more question. Aren't you worried that by clearly taking the side of Baghdad you might discourage compromise on the side of Baghdad, or you might actually increase --

**MS NAUERT:** I would take issue with the premise of your question. We don't see it as taking sides with Baghdad. We support a unified, democratic Iraq. Okay?

**QUESTION:** But by opposing the referendum, isn't that taking side with Baghdad's position?

**MS NAUERT:** We support a unified, democratic Iraq, and we want everybody to keep the -- keep their eye on the ball, and that is annihilating ISIS.

**QUESTION:** And on Iran's decision to halt air flights between Kurdistan -- from and to Kurdistan, would you condemn that?

**MS NAUERT:** I'm not aware of that, so I'm sorry, I don't have anything for you on that. Anything -- anything? Anything with -- Laurie. Hi, how are you?

**QUESTION:** I'm fine. You said you want to see constructive dialogue. What about President Erdogan's statement that -- threatening to close the border and to cut off oil exports? "When we close the... taps, their revenues will vanish... they won't be able to find food." Is that constructive dialogue?

**MS NAUERT:** I think that that would -- that certainly sounds like a threat on the part of President Erdogan. But I'm not going to comment on what he's had to say.

**QUESTION:** And what about these implicit threats of military action against the Kurdistan region? What is your view of them?

**MS NAUERT:** Military action by --

**QUESTION:** By Turkey, Iran, and Iraq.

**MS NAUERT:** Look, we want safety and security for the Iraqi people. We had tremendous concerns with this referendum. We've certainly talked about that a lot. That referendum had no basis in the Iraqi constitution or the law, and I'll just leave it at that. Okay?

**QUESTION:** But these military -- these threats of military action, you don't firmly oppose them?

**MS NAUERT:** Look, we oppose violence from any party. I mean, that is clear. We would oppose violence in any way. We want to keep our eye on the ball of ISIS, and that is it. Okay?

**QUESTION:** Same issue?

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Anything else on --

**QUESTION:** Same issue.

**MS NAUERT:** Hold on. Anything else on Iraq before we move on?

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**QUESTION:** Yes.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Michele, you had a question.

**QUESTION:** That was not on Iraq. I was --

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Okay. Go right ahead, we can --

**QUESTION:** So moving on to North Korea.

**MS NAUERT:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** The President tweeted that Otto Warmbier had been tortured. His parents made statements to that effect. So is the State Department agreeing with that? Was he tortured by North Korea?

**MS NAUERT:** So it was such a horrible situation, what happened to him. I think I've been consistent all along to not discuss the manner in which Americans, whether they're people who work for us or American citizens -- the fashion which they've been treated or their medical status or what they've been through. That's not only for their own privacy, but out of respect for Otto Warmbier's family, for his family in this particular instance.

Our sympathies continue to go out to the Warmbier family. I know the interview you're referring to; I'm certainly familiar with that. His death, Otto Warmbier's death, was a great tragedy for all of Americans. It, I believe, helped bring the world together on this issue of DPRK in part. There are obviously a lot of other things, a lot of other horrible activities that North Korea is involved with. But this was one I think that the world simply couldn't stand for.

The President said that Otto Warmbier's fate deepens our determination to prevent such tragedies from taking place against other innocent people around the world at the hands of a regime -- and this is a regime who does not care one bit about the rule of law, human rights, or any kind of human decency.

**QUESTION:** But just to be clear, since the President of the United States is tweeting that he was --

**MS NAUERT:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** -- what did he say, "tortured beyond belief," the State Department isn't disputing that?

**MS NAUERT:** Look, I'm not going to confirm it, I'm not going to deny it. I think it is very clear that what happened to Otto Warmbier was horrific. And that's why I continue to say our sympathies go out to his family. I am not going to comment on his condition or what his condition was when he came home. I'm trying to set a standard here, and that is to not comment on people's health or their treatment in that fashion.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And on a similar note, the President also said that Kim Jong-un is "obviously a madman." I know in the past there were statements made that he seems to be rational and the decisions are rational. So what is the State Department's take on his status?

**MS NAUERT:** I think -- we certainly have tremendous concerns about the actions and the activities of Kim Jong-un's regime. They're destabilizing. What they are doing to other nations in terms of -- I mean, look at Japan.

**QUESTION:** But --

**MS NAUERT:** Flying over the ballistic missiles. I mean, that is certainly a huge concern of ours, and that's why we continue to say to Japan and to the Republic of Korea that you're our allies, we stand in defense of you.

**QUESTION:** But does the – does the State Department believe that this is a rational leader or not?

**MS NAUERT:** I'm not going to – I'm – you will never hear me characterize if a leader is rational or irrational. I'm just not going to do that. I don't want to do that from this position here. The President certainly is a very effective communicator, and the President speaks very clearly in terms of his position coming out of the White House. But here at this department, I'm not going to characterize that.

**QUESTION:** So you feel that the tweets of – of the name-calling and the statements made over Twitter on North Korea, you feel like that is effective communication?

**MS NAUERT:** I think the President is an effective communicator. I think people know exactly where he stands. We have had a good deal of success in pushing forward with our diplomacy campaign. That hasn't changed. That certainly hasn't changed. And the President has helped rally the world together, rally the world together in the peaceful pressure campaign against Kim Jong-un's regime.

**QUESTION:** So you think those tweets are helpful?

**MS NAUERT:** Look, what I am saying is that we have seen – we have seen success moving forward in our pressure campaign. We have seen at least 20 countries that have now come forward and either – have either kicked out North Korean diplomats – Spain is an example of one of them; the President just speaking with the prime minister at the White House a short while ago. That is one example of a success. We've seen other countries curtailing guest workers who are work – North Korean guest workers who are in those – in those countries. And I think the President has done a strong job – some may not want to give him credit for that, but the President, Secretary Tillerson, have helped lead that effort here on the part of the United States.

**QUESTION:** In a recent interview, Mr. Warmbier said that he would like to see North Korea included on the state sponsor of terrorism list. Is that something the administration is considering?

**MS NAUERT:** In terms of that, as you know – and I can certainly see why Otto Warmbier's family would feel that way. They have every right to be devastated by the death of their young son. As you all know, when the State Department looks at putting a country back on the state sponsor of terror list, it has to meet certain criteria. I have that criteria in front of me somewhere here and I can go over that with you. But whether or not folks like it, it is a – it's a very specific group of items that a nation would need to go through to fit that definition.

**QUESTION:** Is the State Department examining whether North Korea fits that definition?

**MS NAUERT:** I know that this is something that we constantly assess. I know the Secretary has certainly looked at that, had looked at that certainly in the past when it came to Otto Warmbier. I don't know if that's something that we're looking at today.

**QUESTION:** And ahead of his – the trip to China that you just announced, President Trump today mentioned President Xi Jinping, applauded him for the work that China has done in ordering its central banks not to do business with North Korea. How would you gauge or assess where China is? I know that administration officials here have been saying that China can and should be doing more.

**MS NAUERT:** Mm-hmm.

**QUESTION:** Happy with the progress? How much more needs to happen in the assessment in your eyes?

**MS NAUERT:** I think I'm not going to assign a number to it, but I think we've made quite a bit of progress. I mean, it's really incredible that both China and Russia, for example, have signed on to two of the unanimous UN Security Council resolutions in the past month and a half, or month or so. So that's significant. The fact that China is undergoing activities, taking on steps to try to curb money and shipments and things, trade with North Korea, is also significant.

We have a good relationship with China that I think is evident not only in the Secretary making a trip over there this week, the President will be traveling to China sometime later this year. We have had – we will have had by the end of this year the Four Dialogues with China, and I know we're hosting some Chinese officials here at the State Department later this week.

So I think China has taken tremendous steps in the right direction. There is always more that countries can do, but at this point we want to thank China for the steps that it has taken in the right direction.

**QUESTION:** Are we going to expect the Secretary will still push for China to do more in those dialogues?

**MS NAUERT:** I think one of the things that I mentioned when I was reading out the Secretary's travel is that they will be talking about North Korea. And so I would imagine in those conversations that the Secretary has with his counterparts over there that this would come up as well.

Okay? Anything else on China and North Korea? Hi, how are you?

**QUESTION:** Hi. Yeah, just you mentioned that later this week there will be the first round of the Social and People-to-People Dialogue between the U.S. and China, so what is the expectations from the U.S. side about this dialogue?

And we know that before this first-round dialogue there are just the High-Level People-to-People Dialogue just years ago, so what's the difference between these two? Different ways of --

**MS NAUERT:** What's the difference between High-Level People-to-People Dialogue and --

**QUESTION:** This Social and People-to-People Dialogue – I mean, it does change the name, and – but the contents, that's almost similar or --

**MS NAUERT:** I think one thing – and I'm not sure about the specific title of it. I've not been here long enough to understand the difference between the two, so forgive me for that. I do know that we're looking forward to hosting them. I know we have certainly strong people-to-people ties with Chinese Americans living here in the United States. We look forward to having these conversations with them.

I know it was important to China. When the Secretary was speaking with the Chinese state councilor a couple weeks ago, one of the issues that they talked about was our strong people-to-people ties. And so that's why I just say we look forward to hosting them this week. The Secretary will be there for part of those meetings later this week. And then he also looks forward to getting on a plane and heading over to Beijing. Okay.

**QUESTION:** So may I go around to the --

**QUESTION:** Heather?

**MS NAUERT:** Yes.



**QUESTION:** And she mentioned that the People-to-People Dialogue – we know there are two High-Level Dialogue has been held within this year, Diplomatic and Security Dialogue and Comprehensive Economic Dialogue. How do you evaluate these dialogues or kind of effect to promote U.S.-China relations?

**MS NAUERT:** How do the dialogues promote the relations?

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Or what kind of effect or impact to the two countries --

**MS NAUERT:** Well, I think one thing that's so important – I mean, obviously China – an enormous country and an enormously important country when it comes to trade and, as your colleague mentioned, people-to-people ties. The better that we can both understand one another, the more that we can have meetings to talk about areas of mutual concern, areas where we can better work together. I think that that's important. That's significant. The fact that the President, starting with the first trip with President Xi to Mar-a-Lago in the spring – I believe that was back in March – is significant. The fact that they agreed to four trips – I mean, goodness, that's a long flight, right? I've never been to Beijing, but that's a tremendous effort on the part of the Chinese Government. And the fact that Secretary Tillerson has been here for nine months now and now he's making his second trip to China, that's significant. So we're looking forward to the travel and we're also looking to hosting folks here.

**QUESTION:** Can we go back to --

**QUESTION:** Heather --

**MS NAUERT:** Hold on a second. Matt, do you want to stick on China?

**QUESTION:** Let her go. No.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Okay. Hold on.

**QUESTION:** Thank you. Thank you, Heather. North Korea has been added to the ban on entry into United States. Yesterday White House announced that. Is North Korean diplomat banned too?

**MS NAUERT:** I don't know the answer to that. I don't know the answer to that. Let me see what I can find for you and get back to you. Okay?

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**QUESTION:** I want to go back to the general topic of independence/ --

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**MS NAUERT:** Hold – wait. Hold on. Matt – Matt, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** No, no, no. Go ahead.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. All right.

**QUESTION:** I'm being very polite. It's a – I've turned over a new era.

**QUESTION:** Sorry.

**QUESTION:** New leaf.

**QUESTION:** So Treasury announced earlier today new sanctions on eight North Korean banks and 26 individuals. I was hoping you could go elaborate a bit on what you're hoping to achieve with these sanctions and how they fit into your broader strategy of economic and diplomatic pressure.

**QUESTION:** Right. So Treasury Department announced earlier today that it was going to be targeting eight North Korean banks and 26 individuals who are linked to the North Korean financial networks around the globe. We see that as a sweeping action. As you may recall, just last week, the Treasury had announced – the Treasury Department had announced additional sanctions.

So this is a part of our peaceful pressure campaign, and that is where the United States Government has a lot of tools. Certainly military is one aspect – that's something else – but I'm just talking about diplomacy. And with diplomacy here out of the State Department and the economic tools that the Treasury Department can wield, we think that that will be significant. We think that that will help move North Korea in the right direction. The overall goal is denuclearization, but one way we see that pushing forward, the denuclearization, is getting that money out of Kim Jong-un's regime. It's money that goes – that is spent on the nuclear programs and ballistic missile testing. We think that that is obviously a very bad idea, a destabilizing idea, and that is why we're getting so many countries from around the world to help participate in all this.

Okay. All right. Can we move on from DPRK?

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Can I – I want to go back to the general topic of secession/independence referenda happening around.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** So the President, in his remarks with the Spanish foreign minister, says that the United States supports Spanish unity or a unified Spain, which suggests to me that you guys, as with the Kurds, don't support the Catalonia referendum. Is that correct?

**MS NAUERT:** Here's what I will say. And the President spoke about this as he was meeting with the prime minister of Spain – that Spain is a great country and that Spain should be – remain united. That is what the President said, so I'm not going to move away from that. Spain has been a tremendous ally of ours, not only in serving in wars, but they've also been a part of expelling a North Korean ambassador from Spain just recently. They also house some of our military in Spain.

**QUESTION:** Right. But I want to focus --

**MS NAUERT:** But look, it's a close U.S. partner. Our relationship with Spain is one that we greatly value. We support a strong and united Spain.

**QUESTION:** I understand that, but my question is about – specifically about whether or not you support the Catalan people having a referendum on independence. With the Kurds you clearly did not; you said that before. As you just mentioned at the top of the briefing, "We did not support that referendum," even before they held it, and you're disappointed now after it's been held. So I want to know does the administration --

**MS NAUERT:** I think these countries, though --

**QUESTION:** -- support or --

**MS NAUERT:** These countries, though – I just want to be clear. These countries, however, are very different. While Spain has certainly had its fair share of terrorism, as we've seen in recent months, Spain does not face this ISIS threat that Iraq does, where ISIS had taken over large swaths of that country. We are not engaged in a heavy battle against ISIS in Spain, like the United States and coalition allies are in Iraq. So I think the situations are very different.

We certainly understand that some in Spain might want to hold a referendum. I get that. Other countries have done that as well. We would regard that, though, as an internal matter that's up for the people to decide, but overall we support a unified Spain.

**QUESTION:** Well, I get that, but why is it that the Kurds are not allowed – you don't think the Kurds should have an expression, whatever that expression is, of independence and you seem to think that it's fine or it's okay for the --

**MS NAUERT:** Look, I think we understand --

**QUESTION:** -- for the Catalans.

**MS NAUERT:** I think we understand why. The Kurds are our friends, certainly.

**QUESTION:** And the Catalans aren't?

**MS NAUERT:** They have been – hold on – but they have been terrific and strong fighting partners and had done an incredible job certainly there. Okay.

**QUESTION:** So --

**MS NAUERT:** So we understand why the Kurds would want that, but again – and look, people may not --

**QUESTION:** I don't want to focus on the Kurds. I want to focus on Catalonia.

**MS NAUERT:** People may not want to focus on this, but the fact of the matter is that ISIS had taken over large swaths of that country.

**QUESTION:** Right.

**MS NAUERT:** And in fact, in order to get ISIS out and in order to keep ISIS out and in order to help stabilize that country and get people to be able to come back home and children to go back to school in Mosul and not have to deal with ISIS blowing up buildings and schools and all of that, we say keep your eye on the ball, keep the focus on defeating ISIS, and that this kind of division right now could potentially hurt Iraq.

**QUESTION:** Okay. But so you – you're not going to say --

**MS NAUERT:** I'm just not – I'm not going to compare one to the other.

**QUESTION:** -- whether or not you think that Catalonia should have a referendum or not? Let's just forget about the --

**MS NAUERT:** I'm not going to compare one country to the other.

**QUESTION:** Forget about the Kurds. Okay. Let's not compare them. Do you – does the administration believe that the people of Catalonia should be able to express their opinion?

**MS NAUERT:** I can't believe you just did that. (Laughter.)

**QUESTION:** What?

**MS NAUERT:** Look.

**QUESTION:** Should be able to express their opinion about whether they want to be independent from Spain or not?

**MS NAUERT:** I think that is an internal matter for the people of Spain to decide. We support the Government of Spain. We support a unified Spain.

**QUESTION:** All right.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay? All right.

**QUESTION:** A follow-up on that. I just asked you about the military threats that are implicit to the Kurdistan region being made by Turkey, Iran --

**MS NAUERT:** And what I said is --

**QUESTION:** -- and Iraq, and don't you think -- excuse me, if I can finish my question -- that those military threats are a distraction from the fight against ISIS, that no one should be threatening the Kurdistan region militarily?

**MS NAUERT:** Laurie, I will say this again, and I said this earlier, that we don't support violence on any side. Okay?

Okay. Let's move on then.

**QUESTION:** On Cuba?

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Hi.

**QUESTION:** Can we ask about Cuba?

**MS NAUERT:** Yeah, certainly. Hi, Carol.

**QUESTION:** The Cuban authorities are saying that the foreign minister is coming here, on their request. Is that accurate? And how much do you expect the health of embassy workers to play in these discussions that you will have later today?

**MS NAUERT:** So I can confirm that the Secretary had a late add to his schedule this afternoon. The Secretary will be hosting the Cuban foreign minister here in Washington, here at the State Department. That meeting is set for 5 o'clock today. It was requested -- I can confirm -- by the Cuban Government.

**QUESTION:** And what -- do you expect them to bring more information or what do you -- what is the purpose in their asking?

**MS NAUERT:** I don't want to get ahead of that meeting that's going to take place. So I expect certainly the Secretary will have plenty of questions for them.

**QUESTION:** Can you say anything about how when President Trump back in I believe it was June was in Miami and talked about the – sort of the crackdown, the change in U.S. policy towards Cuba? It doesn't appear that any of those regulations have actually passed and taken effect yet. I was wondering if you could explain what's happened.

**MS NAUERT:** I don't have any updates for you on that. I will see if that comes up at the meeting today, certainly. Yeah.

**QUESTION:** Speaking of meetings, can you – can you tell us what you are able to about the meeting with the Vatican foreign minister?

**MS NAUERT:** I don't have a readout of that meeting. I can tell you, though, that they discussed a variety of issues.

**QUESTION:** (Laughter.) Really?

**MS NAUERT:** They did. Yeah. I mean --

**QUESTION:** It wasn't just one issue? They didn't talk about a variety --

**MS NAUERT:** They discussed a variety of issues. They discussed a lot of --

**QUESTION:** Can we get a little something? I mean, that's a bit --

**MS NAUERT:** They discussed a lot.

**QUESTION:** -- lame, frankly.

**MS NAUERT:** They – (laughter.) I'm sorry you find it lame.

**QUESTION:** They discussed a lot.

**MS NAUERT:** They talked about a lot. Look, the Vatican has representatives and folks all over the world.

**QUESTION:** I get that.

**MS NAUERT:** We have a lot of --

**QUESTION:** Could we get a little bit more specificity?

**MS NAUERT:** We had a lot of – we had a lot of things to discuss with them.

**QUESTION:** I understand.

**MS NAUERT:** It was a good productive meeting, an exchange of ideas. We --

**QUESTION:** On what topics?

**MS NAUERT:** We've certainly found the Vatican to be very helpful in some instances --

**QUESTION:** (Laughter.) If you don't -- but if you can't say --

**MS NAUERT:** But I can't --

**QUESTION:** If you can't --

**MS NAUERT:** I can't get into it beyond that.

**QUESTION:** But if you can't say what the topics were, how can you possibly say that the talks were productive, right?

**MS NAUERT:** I can tell --

**QUESTION:** So can I implore you --

**MS NAUERT:** Yeah, I can tell you they were productive. Yes.

**QUESTION:** Can I implore you --

**MS NAUERT:** Matt, I was in the meeting --

**QUESTION:** -- to try to get a --

**MS NAUERT:** -- and I can tell you the meeting -- the meeting was --

**QUESTION:** Well, did they talk about the guy who was --

**MS NAUERT:** The meeting -- Matt, the meeting was productive, but I'm just not going to get into the --

**QUESTION:** Did they talk --

**MS NAUERT:** -- specifics of the diplomatic conversation. Okay?

**QUESTION:** Did they talk about -- did they talk about the Vatican diplomat who was --

**MS NAUERT:** I'm just -- Matt, I'm just going to leave it at that.

**QUESTION:** Did they talk about Venezuela? Did they talk about Cuba? The Vatican was instrumental in the Obama administration's rapprochement with Cuba. He happens to be meeting with the Cuban foreign minister this afternoon.

**MS NAUERT:** They talked about a lot. I'll just leave it at that.

**QUESTION:** Can -- all right. Well, can I please -- can we please get a little bit more detail or some --

**MS NAUERT:** If I can -- if I can --

**QUESTION:** Actually, a little bit more. Any detail would be nice, Heather. (Laughter.)

**MS NAUERT:** If I can provide you with more, I certainly would be happy to. Okay?

**QUESTION:** Thank you.

**MS NAUERT:** All right.

**QUESTION:** Saudi Arabia?

**MS NAUERT:** Hold on. Hi.

**QUESTION:** Hi. Thanks, Heather. I had a question about Japan. I wondered --

**MS NAUERT:** Oh, by the way, does anybody else have anything on Cuba? We're skipping around a lot today.

**QUESTION:** Yeah. Just --

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. Well, let me come back to you. Okay?

**QUESTION:** Sure.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay.

**QUESTION:** May I confirm the number of -- relating to the Cuba sonic incident, the number of American people hurt? Some news outlets say it's 25 people. May I confirm this number?

**MS NAUERT:** I can confirm the number of 21.

**QUESTION:** Oh, 21.

**MS NAUERT:** Twenty-one Americans have been medically confirmed as having been affected by incidents in Cuba. That number could change. I have been very clear and very forthcoming with all of you. When those numbers have been changed and we've been able to medically confirm it, I've brought it to you or other representatives at the State Department have brought that to you. And so if that number changes I will let you know, but as of now, it is 21.

**QUESTION:** Secretary Rex Tillerson said U.S. Government was reviewing whether or not to close down the American embassy in Havana. Is there any decision made right now or still under --

**MS NAUERT:** We are -- as we would with any of our facilities around the world, that is something that we would constantly assess our security posture there. The Secretary starts many meetings here at the State Department asking this question first, and that is: Are our people safe? That is a top priority for the Secretary. Protecting the lives and ensuring the safety and security of Americans.

**QUESTION:** And --

**MS NAUERT:** Yeah.

**QUESTION:** You've mentioned that Cuba has been cooperative. Do you believe the Cuban Government that they don't know what has happened here?

**MS NAUERT:** I don't know the answer to that. They have been cooperative. I know they have helped in terms of the investigation and have provided information. They've come to us in different instances, and so I don't want to get ahead of what the Secretary's conversations are going to be this afternoon, though.

**QUESTION:** The reason I ask is because today in the hearing before House – before the House committee, the deputy secretary was asked that question. And he intimated that he didn't believe it, and he said it was reasonable suspicion that the Cuban Government knows what happened here. So --

**MS NAUERT:** I don't have the deputy secretary's comments in front of me, and I didn't get to catch the entire hearing on Capitol Hill. But we have followed this issue very closely, you all know that, we've talked about here a lot. We've got the meeting coming up later this afternoon, so we'll just see – have to see what comes out of that. Okay?

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS NAUERT:** Anything else on Cuba?

**QUESTION:** Heather --

**MS NAUERT:** Anything else on Cuba?

**QUESTION:** Yeah.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay, go ahead. Let me get over to you, then. Hi, how are you?

**QUESTION:** Hi, Heather. Thank you. I wondered if you had anything on the agreement for cooperation between the United States and Japan concerning the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. I have two questions about that.

**MS NAUERT:** I don't. Was there a – was there a meeting where something came out of that?

**QUESTION:** No, it wasn't a meeting. It's just that we were wondering if the U.S. was going to remain in the agreement or not, and then we also had a question about the buildup of plutonium stockpiles because the United States is concerned about that.

**MS NAUERT:** Got it. I have nothing for you on either of those, but we can certainly look into it and find you something. Okay?

**QUESTION:** All right. Thanks, Heather.

**QUESTION:** (Off-mike.)

**MS NAUERT:** Okay. All right. Janne, hi.

**QUESTION:** Yeah, last week, I ask a question about the South Korean President Moon provide \$8 million to North Korea for humanitarian assistance. So is the humanitarian assistance included UN sanctions or --

**MS NAUERT:** I – you did ask me about that last week.

**QUESTION:** Yeah.



**MS NAUERT:** I haven't been able to confirm that that offer was in fact made, so I'm just not going to weigh in on that.

**QUESTION:** But the South Korean Government noticed that issue to State Department.

**MS NAUERT:** Yeah, I'm not aware that we were formally notified of that.

**QUESTION:** You didn't have any --

**MS NAUERT:** I'm not aware that we were notified of that.

**QUESTION:** President Moon say that they notified the United States --

**MS NAUERT:** I'm sorry?

**QUESTION:** South Korean Government announced that they noticed to the United States.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay, then I would have to -- I -- let me refer you back to the South Korean Government on that.

**QUESTION:** Okay.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay? I just -- I'm afraid -- I just don't have anything, okay?

**QUESTION:** Afghanistan?

**QUESTION:** All right, hold on.

**MS NAUERT:** Yes.

**QUESTION:** You're not going to get -- I hope you didn't think you were going to get out of here without getting any questions about the travel ban.

**MS NAUERT:** No -- oh yeah.

**QUESTION:** You did?

**MS NAUERT:** No. No, no.

**QUESTION:** Oh. Good.

**MS NAUERT:** I'm happy to take it.

**QUESTION:** So Sunday -- the presidential proclamation that came out Sunday night appears to many people to have been very carefully designed to try to avoid the same kind of legal challenges and court injunctions that had blocked or significantly impaired the two earlier versions of this, and the complaints against the two earlier ones were that it was essentially a Muslim ban. And my first question about this is that the addition of North Korea and Venezuela -- and a very small number of Venezuelans,

comparatively, will be affected by this, and the number of North Koreans applying for immigrant and non-immigrant visas is miniscule – so the number of these two countries that had been added in what people say looks like and probably is an attempt to avoid the Muslim ban tarnish is infinitesimal.

**MS NAUERT:** Here's why I --

**QUESTION:** It appears to -- let me just finish.

**MS NAUERT:** Okay, go ahead.

**QUESTION:** I think that even proponents of this will agree that the impact of this will be disproportionately felt by people who practice the religion of Islam. Is that not the case?

**MS NAUERT:** Here is the reality of the situation, and some would like to make this a lot broader: There was an executive order at the President's direction earlier on this year, and the State Department along with DHS sent notes and had diplomatic engagements with every country around the globe. We told those countries our expectations about when they had someone who was applying for a visa here in the United States the kind of documentation and the kind of information that would be needed in order to adjudicate a visa, in order for our consular affairs people to say, "Yes, you can come into the United States."

We found at that time about 16 countries were not giving us the information that we required that our consular affairs officials could verify and then give somebody a visa and adjudicate a visa -- 16 countries. Fifty days later, eight of those countries came off this list. Eight of those countries came into compliance and they said, "Here you go, United States. Here's the information that you need on behalf of our citizens so they can come." That's a story that's not being told. That's a story that's not being reported. Those eight countries fell into compliance.

Eight other countries, however, did not. North Korea -- some may say, well, why is North Korea on that list? Not a lot of North Koreans come to the United States. That is true, but here's the information we get from North Korea: basically zip. We want to get information --

**QUESTION:** And how was -- how was the request for information -- this information to the North Koreans relayed to them? Were they --

**MS NAUERT:** I -- well, we don't have an embassy there, so I imagine --

**QUESTION:** Did you ever actually even ask the North Koreans for this information?

**MS NAUERT:** I imagine that that was done. I don't know for a fact how that was done with the instance of North Korea, but as you know, we have various channels of communication through other governments who could raise our concerns.

So the point is that these countries were not in compliance with the information that we had asked in order to allow their citizens to come to the United States. The Department of Homeland Security came up with these guidelines. We put these countries on alert. It's a comprehensive set of criteria to assess these countries' information and the information sharing policies, and not all these countries are in compliance, and that's why this is going into effect.

**QUESTION:** Okay. I'm not -- listen, I'm not taking a position on whether this is right, wrong, good, bad, or whatever. I'm just asking -- my original question was: Is it not correct that a disproportionate number of people who are affected by this are Muslims?

**MS NAUERT:** Matt, you're trying to make this something that's about --

**QUESTION:** It's a very easy question to answer.

**MS NAUERT:** But by asking that question, the very premise of your question is you're trying to make this about religion, and what I can tell you standing right here today is that the countries on the list – the eight countries on the list – are not in compliance with providing information to the United States.

**QUESTION:** So it's purely coincidence that six of the eight countries on your list happen to be predominantly Muslim countries? That just has to do – has nothing to do with anything other than --

**MS NAUERT:** This is something that came together with the White House and the executive order, Department of Homeland Security, and the State Department.

**QUESTION:** Right. Okay. So – so it is purely coincidence, then, that of the eight country – that six of the eight countries on this list just happened to be – including Iran – happened to be Muslim --

**MS NAUERT:** These countries --

**QUESTION:** -- predominantly Muslim?

**MS NAUERT:** -- have not improved their criteria. They have not improved their ability to give us information. They have not – provide us a – provided us with the information that we need to properly adjudicate visas. Now, this is not permanent. These countries can get off this list if they provide us the information that our consular affairs officers need to adjudicate visas. They can get off the list.

**QUESTION:** So if – but – so you would argue then that it is just – it just happens to be that six of the eight countries are predominantly Muslim?

**MS NAUERT:** Matt, I think I've been clear about this. Okay?

**QUESTION:** What – no, I'm just asking.

**MS NAUERT:** Yeah, no. I think I've --

**QUESTION:** It just --

**MS NAUERT:** -- been clear about this.

**QUESTION:** -- do you – okay. Is it not just a fact that the disproportionate – the vast majority of people who will be affected by this are Muslim?

**MS NAUERT:** Matt, I don't know the answer to that. Okay? I'm sorry. I'm not going to characterize it that way. Okay? I know you all want to drag us into that, but that's not what this is about.

**QUESTION:** But Heather, but there is no diplomatic relationship between U.S. and North Korea.

**MS NAUERT:** Yes. And that's why I said --

**QUESTION:** Yeah. How they (inaudible) --

**MS NAUERT:** I don't know how that information was translated to North Korea.

**QUESTION:** And North Korea (inaudible) --

**MS NAUERT:** We do have different ways of being able to get information to them. So that is the country. I just don't know how we provided that to them, but we've sent out information to all the other countries, certainly.

**QUESTION:** Okay. And then -- and the Iranians the same way? Because you don't have diplomatic relations with them either.

**MS NAUERT:** I don't know how it went to -- that's just not a question that I asked today. I should've asked that question.

**QUESTION:** Okay. Well --

**MS NAUERT:** I'm sorry I don't have the answer to it.

**QUESTION:** -- can you -- so then could you take the question? How exactly did Iran come back and either not do anything or did not -- did they respond at all to your query? How was the query made? The same with the North Koreans.

**MS NAUERT:** If I can get that for you, I will.

**QUESTION:** And when the phase two of this takes effect on the 18th of October, is it correct that the exceptions that had been made by -- that had been ruled -- that the Supreme Court had ordered you to make for close family members and bona -- and people with bona fide relationships with U.S. entities, is it correct that those are gone as a -- as blanket category exemptions and that they may only remain in a -- as a case-by-case exemption at the discretion of the adjudicating officer? Is that correct?

**MS NAUERT:** I'm not -- you know what, I'm not certain of that, so I want to make sure -- it's a very specific question, so I want to make sure I get you the right answer. So let me get back to you on that. Okay?

**QUESTION:** Thanks.

**MS NAUERT:** Folks, we got to go. Thank you.

(The briefing was concluded at 3:48 p.m.)

---

The Office of Website Management, Bureau of Public Affairs, manages this site as a portal for information from the U.S. State Department.

External links to other Internet sites should not be construed as an endorsement of the views or privacy policies contained therein.

Note: documents in Portable Document Format (PDF) require Adobe Acrobat Reader 5.0 or higher to view, [download Adobe Acrobat Reader \(http://get.adobe.com/reader/\)](http://get.adobe.com/reader/).